

CEC awards \$5 million for CA forest biomass gasification plant

April 10, 2015 | By [Jaclyn Brandt](#)

The California Energy Commission (CEC) has awarded nearly \$5 million to Phoenix Energy for a proposed forest biomass gasification plant in North Fork, CA. The plant will be built by Phoenix Energy's joint venture North Fork Community Power.



The Edmund G. "Pat" Brown State Office Building in San Francisco, home of the California Public Utilities Commission. Credit: Coolcaesar/Wikimedia Commons

"The award will be used to construct one of the first forest-sourced biomass gasification plants, as well as research into the emerging field of forest biomass utilization," Phoenix Energy said in a statement. "The plant will utilize local forest biomass sustainably sourced from restoration and fuel reduction activities on local forest lands, including the Sierra National Forest."

The plant will be one of the first to use forest-based fuel in accordance with California's bioenergy law, Senate Bill (SB) 1122, according to Phoenix Energy, and will produce electricity, heat, and biochar.

"This project is a fantastic community story and an example of what can be accomplished with a robust a public/private partnership," said Phoenix Energy CEO Gregory Stangl. "In the North Fork community, a sawmill was the main employer for years, and local jobs evaporated when it closed down in the 1990s. This facility will not only make an impact on reducing fire danger and stopping wasteful 'pile and burn' disposal of excess forest material, but will bring back permanent jobs to a town where the forest economy used to provide them. California is littered with communities up and down the Sierra foothills with a similar story."

The plant is being supported by the North Fork Community Development Council (CDC), whose goal is to continue economic development in the area. The area was traditionally a logging economy, but with the closure of the North Fork Mill in 1994, the North Fork CDC has been working to help the economy survive.

"We are delighted to be able to combine environmental stewardship together with job creation and sustainable energy production for our community," said Dan Rosenberg, North

Fork CDC President. "We are hoping that our plant will serve as a model for other forested communities while having a positive environmental impact and improving the fire safety of our community."

The CEC grant will help finance the first phase -- or 1 megawatt -- of construction of the plant.

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